

GVSU Graduate Student Association Bylaws (*Approved 9/8/2023*)

Table of Contents

- A. Annual Budgeting Process Timeline**
- B. Registered Graduate Student Organizations (RSOs)**
- C. Graduate Funding Board Overview**
- D. Budget Request Deadline**
- E. Eligible Organizations and Individuals**
- F. Eligible for GSA Funding**
- G. Ineligible for GSA Funding**
- H. Preparing, Submitting and Presenting a Funding Request**
- I. Spending Approved Funding**
- J. Cancellation Policy**
- K. Financial Reporting**

A. Annual Budgeting Process Timeline

1. Grand Valley State University (GVSU)'s fiscal year begins on July 1st and ends on June 30th of the forthcoming year. The annual budgeting process of individual graduate organizations should follow the university's budget planning milestones and timelines. Registered graduate organizations should set their organizational budget for the forthcoming fiscal year no later than the end of September.

B. Registered Graduate Student Organizations

1. Graduate programs and students at Grand Valley State University (GVSU) are encouraged to form Graduate Registered Student Organizations (RSOs). Graduate RSOs strive to increase their on-campus programs and off-campus event participation. On-campus events are to be organized professionally and ensured to be successful.
2. Promotion of events and communication between the related departments of GVSU are to be considered as major components of designing successful events. Graduate Student Organizations are intended to disseminate curriculum, discipline, and co-curricular information to their members regularly. They are intended to contribute to and influence the greater graduate student community through their social media network. Graduate Registered Student Organizations (RSOs) do their best to fundraise for their on- and off-campus programs, events and conferences.

C. Graduate Funding Board Overview

1. Graduate Student Association (GSA) serves as a control body of the Graduate Funding Board and the Finance Officer of the GSA chairs the Funding Board meetings. GSA has no formal role in approving funding requests.
2. Positions from within the Graduate Funding Board will be filled by representatives from current graduate RSOs, whereby each RSO is allotted one voting seat on the Graduate Funding Board. While each graduate student organization is required to have a funding officer, the graduate student organization may choose to delegate any member to represent their interests at each meeting.
3. Once the GSA budget has been determined, any President or Funding Officer of a registered graduate organization at Grand Valley State University can submit a funding proposal via LakerLink (<http://www.lakerlink.com>) to be reviewed and voted upon by the Graduate Funding Board.
4. The Graduate Funding Board reviews and approves or denies funding requests.
5. Quorum must be achieved for the Funding Board to allocate resources. Quorum is defined as 40% + 1 of active RSOs. During the Spring & Summer Semesters, Quorum is defined as a full Executive Board.
6. Every Registered Student Organization is expected to have representation at every funding board meeting. Acceptable representation (in order of preference) includes the finance officer, a member of the e-board, or any official member of the organization (registered on LakerLink).
7. Repercussions for missed meetings: If an RSO fails to send a representative to three or more

meetings, this RSO will be ineligible for funding for the remainder of the academic year. The Finance Officer may appeal the absence. Once submitted, GSA will review the appeal, which may result in no repercussions. A maximum of three meetings and no more than two consecutive meetings may be appealed during an academic year.

- a. GSA e-board may override the appeal process in the event of extenuating circumstances.
8. All voting is determined by a simple majority of RSO representatives present at the meeting.
9. RSO's must have a board member representative present when requesting funding.
10. If the RSO with a funding request is unable to send a representative to the meeting, they must contact the GSA Finance Officer at least 48 hours before the meeting to ask that their funding request be delayed until the next Funding board meeting. RSOs can only request a funding delay for one month.
11. If an RSO that is requesting funds does not have a representative at the meeting and has not requested a delay 48 hours in advance, their respective funding request will be denied.
12. In the event of a tie, the Chair of the Graduate Funding Board casts the deciding vote.
13. The Chair Of the Graduate Funding board will be the active Financial Officer of the Graduate Student Association, who represents the entire graduate student body. In case of emergency, any other GSA e-board member may act as a substitute; no funding decisions can be made without a representative of the GSA e-board present.
14. Meetings are attended by GSA advisors and staff from the Graduate School.
15. Minutes will be taken during each meeting and uploaded to the GSA website to ensure effective communication paths. Members at the committee will have knowledge of approved funding requests in LakerLink after the meeting.

D. Budget Request Deadline

1. Budget requests must be submitted BEFORE the travel or event occurs (i.e. before money is spent).
2. Budget requests must be submitted in LakerLink at least 7 days (one week) prior to the Funding Board Meeting.
3. Budget requests will be considered and awarded on a rolling basis as funds are available.
4. For the approval of budget requests in LakerLink, the Graduate Funding Board meetings will be held monthly during fall/winter semesters.
5. Based on need, additional ad-hoc meetings can be scheduled including spring/summer.

E. Eligible Organizations and Individuals

1. To be eligible for funding, a requesting organization must:
 - a. Be in good standing with the University.
 - b. Be a Registered Student Organization (RSO) on LakerLink with a complete roster

(President, Financial Officer, 2 other officers, Campus Advisor).

i. The RSO registration process is described in the RSO handbook:

<http://www.gvsu.edu/rsohandbook/>

- c. Have an updated LakerLink profile, which must be renewed at the beginning of the academic year.
 - d. Have no outstanding judicial sanctions with the Student Organization Review Board (SORB)
 - e. Be in good standing with the GSA through adhering to the attendance policy.
2. To be eligible for funding, a requesting individual must:
 - a. Be enrolled in at least 3 credit hours a semester.
 - b. Be an active member of a graduate program at GVSU.
 - c. Be an active member of the GSA on LakerLink.
 - d. Attend at least three meetings in total; including the meeting before they request funding, the meeting where they are requesting funding, and the meeting after they have requested funding.
 - e. An individual student whose program does not have an RSO must join GSA via Lakerlink and can apply for funding and must attend and vote on other funding requests in Funding Board Meetings.
 3. Enrollment and travel funding:
 - a. The student must be enrolled during the semester of his/her/their travel.
 - b. If a student is traveling between semesters, he/she/they must still be a student in good academic standing for the semester following their travel.
 4. Graduate Academic Conference Fund:
 - a. Students who are first authors on a presentation must first apply to the Graduate Academic Conference Fund. If they are unable (eg. denied, missed timeline, already received) to receive funding, they may apply through GSA for funds.
 5. The [GVSU Student Code of Conduct](#) and the [RSO Handbook](#) apply to all participants in funded travel.
 6. An individual graduate student can receive funding through GSA once per year.

F. Eligible for GSA Funding

1. Organizational / professional travel with a clear benefit to the graduate student community.
 - a. Travel to academic conferences/meetings sponsored by professional organizations will be given highest priority.
 - b. Graduate students are encouraged to request funding to attend virtual conferences.

Funding may be used for registration fees for virtual conferences.

- c. GSA will only allow one organization per graduate program to receive travel funding for the same event when participants are eligible through the umbrella grad program organization (e.g. honor societies). This is intended to eliminate the proliferation of additional organizations for the sole purpose of accessing a greater proportion of travel funding and to maintain equity in the funding process for students in all graduate programs.
 - e. Professional conferences:
 - i. Conference registration fees:
 - 1. Early bird registration is strongly encouraged for conference registration fees.
 - 2. Any late fees added to conference registration will not be considered for funding.
 - 3. Meals are not eligible for reimbursement, unless included in the conference fee.
 - 4. *Reasonable air, bus, train or car rental fees to/from hotel or airport or conference site. (*Defined as the cost of a standard advance purchase air ticket, Greyhound bus fare or Amtrak train fare).
 - ii. Transportation:
 - 1. Car rental:
 - 2. Fees will be reimbursed only if the travel to the event/conference will take place primarily by car.
 - 3. Car rental fees will not be reimbursed when traveling to conference takes place by plane, train or bus.
 - 4. Drivers are expected to obey all federal and state laws while driving.
 - 5. When using a rental vehicle, fuel costs are covered if included in the final rental price of the vehicle.
 - 6. Mileage costs are reimbursable at the GVSU Travel Policy rate while using a personal vehicle
 - 7. Airfare (Economy, *no* upgrades or additional baggage fees).
 - iii. Lodging:
 - 1. Estimates of cost in writing from the hotel are accepted
 - 2. If prices change after funding has been approved, no additional funding will be awarded.
 - 3. Reservations for hotel/transportation that have NOT been paid will also be accepted.
2. On-campus events with clear benefit to the graduate student community.
- a. Academic and professionally focused events/programs.
 - b. Food: GSA will only consider requests that include a quote from [Laker Food Co.](#) at GVSU.
 - c. Rental Equipment from GVSU is eligible for funding.
 - d. Speaker gifts/honoraria can only be requested for up to \$50.00, and only for staff/faculty/students outside of the requesting graduate program.
 - e. Gifts/honoraria are subject to the review of the Graduate Funding Board and the Graduate School.

3. Miscellaneous

- a. Additional funding requests beyond the scope of identified fundable expenses may be considered by the Graduate Funding Board at the discretion of the Finance Officer in collaboration with the GSA Faculty & Staff Advisor

G. Ineligible for GSA Funding

1. Travel already supported by another source of Student Life Funds (i.e. no double dipping)
2. A separate funding request for the Graduate Academic Conference Fund must be submitted for students presenting their research as first authors. If the Graduate Funding Board approves conference attendance of a selected student, who also received funding from the [Graduate Academic Conference Fund](#), the maximum funding from the Graduate Funding Board will be \$400.
3. Attendance at events for personal career development (interviews, job fairs, etc.).
4. GSA funding will not be awarded to adjunct or regular faculty or staff as they have other avenues for funding travel; however, graduate students with assistantships are eligible.
5. Funding will not cover fuel or mileage for personally owned vehicles. Funding will only cover fuel for rented vehicles if included in the final rental fee.
6. Meals*, tips, and traffic citations. will not be reimbursed. These are considered individual costs. (*Meals can only be covered if they are included in the registration fee.)
7. GSA will not fund any travel associated with credit bearing graduate coursework or academic program requirements (or options) including but not limited to: required or elective courses, internships, fieldwork, or service learning trips.
8. Individuals can obtain no more than \$1,000 in funding from domestic or international travel to conferences.
9. **Maximum funding:** RSOs will receive a maximum of \$10,000 for a conference travel event regardless of the number of members attending; with a maximum funding of \$1,000 per person, whichever amount is less (e.g., 10 members fully funded for \$1000 = \$10,000).
 - a. RSOs may receive funding for multiple conferences/events per fiscal year, pending funding availability, but individual students within the RSO are only eligible for funding once a year.
 - b. Funding amounts are subject to change with the annual budget. The Graduate Funding Board Finance Chair will release information if funding amounts differ from those listed in the bylaws.

10. **Any expense incurred prior to Graduate Funding Board approval will not be reimbursed.** (If it was purchased before it was approved for funding, it is the student's responsibility).

11. Any costs above and beyond the maximum amount of funding awarded to a student or RSO will be covered by the individual.

H. Preparing, Submitting and Presenting a Funding Request

1. Preparing a Request:

- a. The funding request of the organization needs to be related to the mission of the Graduate RSO. Organizations need to seek the approval of the Graduate Funding Board after finalizing and submitting their funding requests in LakerLink. Organizations are advised to consult the GSA Finance Officer (gsa_fin@gvsu.edu) before submitting or finalizing their funding requests.
- b. Budget requests for on-campus events or conferences should be separate. Events should not be combined when they are submitted.
- c. Organizations/individuals are required to submit documentation of all costs before funding requests will be considered. This includes, but is not limited to, getting food estimates from Laker Food Co., looking up hotel estimates, etc. If a calculated number is requested, there should be an attached document that details said calculation(s).
 - i. All documentation related to attendance of the conference/event must be submitted to be eligible for funding. Students or organizations applying for partial funding of an event still must submit documentation verifying attendance at said event.
- e. For conference travel requests:
 - i. Verify registration deadlines and plan your request submission accordingly, research and document hotel costs and travel costs.
 - ii. The selection of participants can take place after the program has been funded by the Graduate Funding Board, however, the organization must be able to demonstrate that there is adequate interest in the conference from students before seeking funding. RSOs must provide a list of attendees before funds will be released.
 - iii. An estimate of cost in writing from the hotel/transportation is accepted. If prices change after funding has been approved, no additional funding will be awarded. Upon price changes, funding requests may be updated prior to funding approval.
- f. For on-campus event requests: Include the following documentation.
 - i. Room reservations must be confirmed before the request is presented.
 - ii. Food: Secure quotes from Laker Food Co.
 - iii. Event promotion (design, printing, campus posting and other promotional services): Secure quotes from the Promotions Office.
 - iv. Speakers and other contracts: Do not sign contracts. Request a quote and contact the

Graduate School or GSA advisor regarding signing contracts.

v. External support required for on campus events (e.g. guest speakers, DJs) must be approved by the Graduate School prior to filing funding requests. Approval from Graduate School must be included with funding requests.

2. Submitting your Request:

a. Funding submissions must be submitted seven (7) days (one full week) in advance of the Funding Board meeting. [Funding Board Meeting Schedule](#)

b. Student Organizations submitting a request: (**Only the Financial Officer or President of an organization can access the forms to create a funding request.*)

i. When you are ready to submit your request: Log in to LakerLink

a. Once you have signed in, click on the grid next to your icon.

b. Click "Manage" in the pull-down menu.

c. Under "My Memberships" on the Manage page, click the organization you are making the request for.

d. On your organization's manage page, click on the three bars to display a pull out menu.

e. Scroll down to "Finance".

f. Click "Create New Request".

g. Select which type of Funding Request you are making.

h. Graduate organizations will use the "Graduate Orgs Conference Fees" or "Graduate Orgs Campus Programs" forms on Laker Link. The other forms are for undergraduate student organizations.

i. Follow the steps of the form when prompted.

j. Review form and make sure that all required fields are completed.

k. Submit Request.

c. Individual graduate students w/ no corresponding graduate RSO submitting a request:

1. Log in to LakerLink

2. Once you have signed in, click on your user icon.

3. Scroll down on the pull-out menu and click "Submissions".

4. Click the "Budgeting" tab on the right side of the "My Submissions" page.

5. Click "Create Request" (**select the form for graduate students*).

6. Follow the steps of the form when prompted.

7. Review the form and make sure that all required fields are completed for each section.

8. Submit Request.

3. Once you have submitted your funding request:

a. GSA Finance Officer will acknowledge the receipt of funding requests, review funding requests and may provide recommendations, as needed, in a timely manner.

b. GSA Finance Officer will call a monthly GSA Funding Board meeting to discuss approval of any proposed funding requests.

c. The graduate RSO asking for funds will present their proposal at the GSA Funding Board Meeting.

4. Presenting your request:

- a. The Chair of the Graduate Funding Board will determine the meeting schedule for funding requests. The dates, times, and locations will be posted to the GSA website. RSOs can expect a Zoom link for the Funding Board meeting from the Chair of the Graduate Funding Board one week prior to the meeting.
- b. RSOs requesting funding must have a member of the e-board present at the meeting
- c. Individuals requesting funding must attend the meeting.
- d. Present a brief synopsis of your event, which will be followed by a question and answer period for funding board members.
- e. Be prepared to answer questions about the funding request at the planned event.
- f. GSA Funding Board Committee may ask questions and propose changes to the proposal(s), if needed.
- g. Requests will be passed by a majority vote.

5. If your request is approved:

- a. After the meeting, the funding request(s) of the organization will be marked as approved, partially approved, or denied in LakerLink.
- b. GSA Finance Officer will contact the RSO Financial Officer or individual student approved for funding with next steps, including an introduction to the Graduate School Professional Support Staff for processing
- c. Graduate RSO should choose one representative to discuss the details/logistics of receiving the funding with Graduate School Professional Support Staff.
- d. Graduate Student Organizations need to fill out an online event assessment form within 14 days after each specific program, event or conference. Event and travel assessment forms can be found on the LakerLink profile of GSA under forms.

I. Spending Approved Funding

1. Read the comments posted on your approved funding request in LakerLink.
2. Every RSO will designate a Financial Officer (identified in LakerLink) who will serve as the exclusive contact with the Graduate School to arrange payments and reimbursement.
3. The Graduate School and the Finance Officer of Graduate Student Association must be immediately notified of any modifications to previously approved items.
4. DO NOT SPEND FUNDS until you get approval on Laker Link through the Graduate Student Association. Contact the Graduate School for assistance with the logistics of placing orders, purchasing items, and processing reimbursements. GSA Funding Board MUST APPROVE REQUESTS BEFORE purchases can be made. Any items that have been paid for prior to being approved by GSA Funding Board will NOT be reimbursed.
5. Funding is STRICTLY AVAILABLE for items AS OUTLINED IN APPROVED FUNDING REQUEST. Changes CANNOT be made after request is approved.
 - a. If costs go up after a specific amount is approved, additional costs will be the responsibility of the student, and the P-card may not be used for amounts above the approved amount.
 - b. Funds CANNOT be used by students not listed on the funding request. ONLY students whose names are included on the approved funding request are eligible for funding.

- c. The P-card can ONLY be used for items that are approved by the Funding Board, and for the specific amount approved. The P-card may NOT be used to register for additional conference workshops.
- d. After funding is approved, students may NOT change their mode of transportation or from hotel / motel to AirBnb or VRBO.
- e. If you are concerned about potential increases in travel / lodging costs, it is recommended that you increase your request slightly to account for potential price increases.
- f. Unused funds may not be used for unapproved / additional / items or upgrades, including but not limited to: additional workshops, additional conference registrations for students not listed in the funding request.

6. Purchasing Card (P-Card) Usage:

- a. Conference registration: Any group registrations that total \$1,500 or more may not use the P-card to register for their conference. RSOs with group registrations of \$1,500 or more must either contact the conference to request an invoice for the Graduate School to pay or self-register and request reimbursement.
- b. The P-card may NOT be used for Airbnb or Vrbo rentals.
- c. The Graduate School P-card may not be used to book transportation of any kind. Transportation will be a reimbursable expense only.
- d. Complete receipts must be submitted as a PDF to devries3@gvsu.edu. Screenshots, partial receipts, receipts forwarded as part of an email body will NOT be accepted. Each receipt must be its own PDF document.

7. All students must adhere to RSO policies/procedures found in www.gvsu.edu/rsohandbook

8. Organizations may obtain guidance on spending approved funding from the Graduate School (616-331-7105) or gradschool@gvsu.edu.

9. Students are not permitted to sign contracts as they would not be enforceable and could create a personal liability for the student. GVSU faculty and staff with signature authority for GSA funds include advisors of Registered Student Organizations, the Associate Vice-Provost of the Graduate School, the Graduate School Assistant, and the GSA advisors.

10. Reimbursements:

- a. Bus, train, and car rental fees will be reimbursed after the conference.
- b. Registration fees, airfare, or lodging can be prepaid before the conference, but not before receiving funding approval.
- c. Airfare can be prepaid by individual students before a conference - but not before receiving funding approval - and then reimbursed by the Graduate School before a conference with the understanding that if a student receives reimbursement for the airfare and then does not attend the conference, they must return the reimbursement to the Graduate School.
- d. Meal, fuel, and parking costs cannot be reimbursed. (Meals can only be funded if they are included in the registration fee.)
- e. Lodging can be paid with the Graduate School p-card prior to the conference but if the hotel requires that a card be presented at check-in or check-out, the student will have to use their own card and then be reimbursed for ELIGIBLE charges. Eligible charges include room rate, taxes, fees, and parking.
- f. In the case of travel to a conference, students seeking reimbursement must submit their receipts, via email, to the Graduate School at gradschool@gvsu.edu.
- g. Complete receipts must be submitted as a PDF to devries3@gvsu.edu. Screenshots, partial receipts,

receipts forwarded as part of an email body will NOT be accepted. Each receipt must be its own PDF document.

- h. Students who have received email confirmations for registration or airfare should include the entire email, not just the portion showing payment. In their email to the Graduate School, include the G number, amount from each receipt to be reimbursed, and the address for the check to be sent. Reimbursement requests to be easily identifiable with each attendee. Also include the Conference name, location and dates.
- i. Hotel receipts must include the full folio including each night's charges including rate, fees, taxes, dates of stay, location, hotel name, etc for each room
- j. Transportation receipts must show the entire transaction including rate, fees such as baggage fees, taxes, etc, dates of travel, destinations, etc.
- k. Include with receipts name, G number, address where want reimbursement check sent.
- l. Receipts may be emailed to gradschool@gvsu.edu; you may include all receipts in one email.
- m. Any questions and requests regarding travel expense reimbursements are to be directed to the Graduate School (gradschool@gvsu.edu).
- n. The Graduate School will facilitate the timely processing of reimbursements.
- o. The Graduate Student Organization should submit all receipts for expenses incurred related to an event, including the confirmation forms for catering, room reservations and lecturer's fees, not later than 14 days after the event.
- p. GVSU Conference Services confirmation forms should be submitted to Graduate School as soon as possible, as they require an approval signature and FOAP.
- q. Reporting:
 - a. Within 14 days of travel / event, RSO's and students that receive funding should submit a report to the GSA Finance Officer that includes the following information:
 - i. Amount of funding used
 - ii. What funding was used for
 - iii. The benefit such funding provided to the graduate community
 - b. Students who received funding should encourage their graduate community, especially their program peers, to consider similar opportunities.

J. Cancellation Policy

1. Students attending a conference must sign a letter of agreement / a consent form which shows that the student has serious intention and possesses the necessary individual financial contribution for his/her travel. Cancellation of the travel without just cause, as determined by the Graduate Funding Committee (sponsored by the GSA Funding Board), will exclude future opportunities for funding for that individual.
2. Exceptions will be considered for unforeseeable emergencies and individual health related problems which prevent or hinder a student's participation.

K. Financial Reporting

The Graduate Student Association (GSA) evaluates the funded programs at the end of every fall and winter semester based on the successful completion of past events, the benefits provided to the graduate student body, and the number of graduate student members involved and/or affected by programs, events and conferences. Grand Valley State University determines the allocation of aggregate funding for GSA and affiliated graduate student organizations based on the current budget picture, prior years' spending, the successful completion of past events, as well as rollover balances (unused funding) from the previous year.